

Shelton State Courier

—Campus Newspaper—

New Series Vol. 3, Number 11

Shelton State Community College

July 29, 1999-August 25, 1999

"Hope" for Shelton?



By Alan Keller, Becky Avery,
and James A. Crawford II

The rumor hit the Shelton State campus a week in advance: Governor Don Siegelman would be coming here to make a major announcement concerning west Alabama. But no one knew what he was planning to say.

The day before he arrived the *Courier* mobilized its staff and came up with a game plan to get plenty of pictures and to get some specific questions to the Gov. concerning our beat: Shelton State.

After we were told there would be no press conference be-

fore or after the announcement, we went to Plan B. We stationed a reporter on each side of the stage and one in the middle of the crowd. Two of them would also be taking pictures.

Governor Siegelman and his entourage fooled everyone by entering the building from the east end, near the theatre. Immediately, the full crowd—hundreds of people—surged towards him.

And what were all of those kids doing there?

Turns out, they were from Shelton's Child Development Center and they had some charming presentations to make to the distinguished guest.



Keeping the Gov. on the run—Don Siegelman was interviewed by the Courier, welcomed by the CDC kids and kept company by Shelton President Tom Umphrey

So far, we had not been able to get our questions in; we would have to wait until after the announcement.

The announcement consisted of the largest road works bill ever started in west Alabama, and of course the governor couldn't help mentioning the lottery and we were all eager to hear what he had to say.

"When you've got education on your mind and you're standing in this great edifice, this wonderful facility, you have to think about the importance of education. When you see these young kids, whose lives will be shaped and largely

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*Sheltoniana Which Can
Be Found Nowhere Else*

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Why do you smoke? Do you know?

By Kathy Bostick

Not only can smoking be grotesque when one inhales, it can also be a gross-out problem for those who merely live around smokers.

At one Tuscaloosa apartment complex there was a recent all-night party. The next morning when another resident went outside, "it looked as though it had snowed cigarette butts."

According to recent research, smoking is more harmful to young people because their bodies are still developing. Articles on the Internet claim there are 4,000 ingredients in cigarettes, with 200 known poisons in the mix. These poisons affect a growing body greatly.

Two of the main reasons young people smoke today are peer pressure and the perception that smoking is "cool." Especially appealing to some college-age students is the look affected

by actors and actresses who smoke in front of millions.

Milady Murphy of the Wellness Center says that in a recent *60 Minutes* segment she learned that actors are paid up to \$100,000 to smoke in a movie. Murphy says the pull of smoking is very strong. "The body of a smoke craves nicotine every 20 minutes. It's a hard habit to kick. If you choose to try, you should get professional help, you should exercise, and you should start to eat right."

Other recent research shows that for cigarette smokers tobacco is a wonder drug. It calms them down when they're stressed; it picks them up when they're fatigued.

Do you know why you smoke? There are many reasons why people do it.

It will poison you throughout your life, and will kill you in the end are two good reasons to quit.



One of the reasons young people smoke is because it looks glamorous to them

Internet Illustration of a smoking Rita Hayworth, '40s movie star

Annie should be right on target at the Bean-Brown

By Jessica Smith

"Rehearsals are going well. This is the biggest show I have ever directed, as far as sets, costumes, and the technical element particularly. I think that audiences will find this a highlight of their summer. It makes you feel good, and you will come out humming the songs," said Michael Carr, direc-

tor of *Annie Get Your Gun*.

With a cast of over 40, rehearsals prove to be tedious, while actors and dancers practice hour after hour, day after day. Anyone watching rehearsals intently would have to break into a sympathetic sweat as the actors not only toil to get their lines and steps right, but to become those characters as well.

During recent rehearsals, en-

semble members fell during tricky maneuvers, the director, Michael Carr, stopped the show to get intricate dance steps right, and sharp-shooting Annie picked off a rather cheesy fowl that fell dead at her feet. But to the onlooker, the show seems to be falling into place perfectly. "The show is going to be

Annie cont'd on pg. 3

MCM 102—Introduction to Media Writing—offered

To coincide with the requirements in Mass Communication at the University of Alabama, Shelton will begin offering Introduction to Media Writing in the fall term.

Dr. Jim Kenny, mass communication instructor, explains that Introduction to Media Writing will replace News Reporting in the regular semester offerings at the college.

"We won't be changing the course all that much," Kenny said. "We will still give the students an opportunity to work on the *Courier* while they learn the basics of media writing."

Introduction to Media Writing is required in all of the majors in the UA College of Communication and Information Sciences. These fields include Advertising and Public relations, Communication Studies, Journalism and Telecommunication and Film.

The class will be held during the fall term on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.

Kenny welcomes inquiries about the class at 2278. He also urges any interested parties to come by the *Courier* office on the west wing of the second floor.

McCray/American Legion scholarship awarded

Jonathan Jacob Short of Tuscaloosa has been named this year's recipient of the Lewis McCray-American Legion Scholarship awarded each year to an outstanding student.

The late Lewis McCray of Moundville taught business law and accounting at Shelton.

McCray served in the Philip-

pines during WWII. In 1967 he was appointed executive director of the West Alabama Planning and Development Council and served in that position until his death in 1997.

He was national vice-commander of the American Legion, as well as State Commander.

McCray was involved in many local, state and national organizations.

Future Issues

The *Courier* looks forward to one more issue this school year: for August. Let us know what you would like to know about Shelton by calling the publisher at 391-2278 or the *Courier* editorial office at 391-2406. You may also visit the *Courier Online* at http://www.shelton.cc.al.us/~courier/courier_main.html

"Keep Looking Up!"

By Dr. Lee Albritton



One of the summer's largest and most fascinating constellation packs quite a sting—Scorpius!

The constellation is complete with head, body, and curved tail with stinger. It is one of the 12 constellations on the ecliptic; therefore the planets and the moon will move through it, and the Sun will appear to pass through it as Earth revolves around it.

Scorpius is easy to find during the summer by simply looking

south after sunset and noticing a bright red star—Antares—that really twinkles! This star is in the neck of the scorpion and to the upper right is its head, made up of three bright stars. To the lower left of Antares is the body and curved tail of the scorpion that will appear just above the horizon.

Red stars like Antares are small and operate at relatively low temperatures, whereas stars with a bluish color are very large and operate at extremely

What I learned in cooking class...

By Becky Avery

Burger King's french fries are good, but are they worth dying for?

Burger King, in its quest to overthrow McDonald's as "Best French Fry Maker," added a lot of fat and calories to its potatoes. Before sending the frozen fries to each individual store, Burger King dips the fries in a coating. This coating is just another saturated fat.

If you have ever had Burger King's fries you may have noticed the brown, crusty edges of the fries. This is the result of the coating after being fried. To me, the extra crusty edges are not worth the extra fat. They are not that much better than the old ones.

This is just one of the observations I've made since taking a "Healthy Cooking" class at Shelton. I haven't changed my eating habits entirely, and I wouldn't expect other college students to do so either. But there are a few things I've learned in class and afterwards that I think are important to share.

Other fast food establishments have "hidden" fats also. If you are like me, you may purchase chicken nuggets with the idea that they contain less fat and calories. The truth is six chicken nuggets typically contain as many calories as an entire burger. "What's more, many chicken and fish-patty sandwiches chalk up as much fat as a pint and a half of ice cream," said the *New England Journal of Medicine*. That is an enormous amount of fat that is not often known about.

Opinion

Do you sometimes have a craving for a big, juicy steak? Before you dig into any protein, you should know how much you should be getting per serving per day, right?

The amount of protein per serving for men is about the size of a deck a cards. For women, it is the size of their palm, approximately six ounces. You should only be having 2-3 servings a day of this. Most people, especially men, tend to eat much more. If you go to Outback Steakhouse and order a 24 ounce steak, that is your suggested amount of protein for two days! Think about this the next time you order from your favorite restaurant.

When buying soft drinks with or without your meal you should first consider the number of calories, the amount of sodium, and the amount of caffeine in each serving. Most drinks contain much more than you may think. No more than three soft drinks a day should be consumed. However, water is the best choice every time.

If you are like me, some days are just too hectic to think about what you are putting in your body. You may even tend to skip meals. Stephanie Wilkins, a registered dietitian at the University of Alabama said, "Students should try to plan ahead and have food packed for the day. Skipping meals or buying food from the vending machine is not good for your body. By packing food you may help boost your energy, increase your concentration level which al-

lows you to stay awake and focus better in classes."

By taking healthy food from home you will also be more likely to save money and lower your calorie intake from the fast food many eat on the go. Skipping meals may lower your calorie intake, but it will also slow your metabolism and will eventually cause drowsiness or even headaches.

If you do not choose to skip meals but would still like to lose weight you may try dieting. Many new fad diets do help you lose the weight and do so very quickly, too quickly. One new fad diet that has become very popular is a high protein, low carbohydrate diet. This diet does help you lose weight. I know from experience.

The diet takes out breads, cereals, and pastas; three of my favorite foods. Like most diets, it was impossible to stick with. As soon as I began to eat those foods again I began to gain the weight back. My body had gotten use to not having those foods to breakdown, so in a way my body did not know what to do with them and just stored the carbs that I had for awhile not been eating. There are many other reasons that you should be very careful when selecting a diet.

Wilkins said, "Fad diet results are short-term and cannot be continued for a long time. They can be very harmful to a person causing fatigue, headaches, and lowering of the immune system."

You've heard it before, but I must say it again: healthy eating only works when you practice it for a lifetime.

Beware the Scorpion

high temperatures. Yellow stars, like our Sun, fall between these two extremes in size and temperature and are "just right" to have planets with ideal conditions for life.

If you are the beach this summer, the Alabama-Florida gulf coast is an ideal location to observe Scorpius.

Keep looking up when you take a walk on the beach, and be as aware as the scorpion above as you are the crabs below.

Shelton State Courier

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The *Shelton State Courier* is a "campus newspaper" written and produced with the help of students.

Among other functions, it is intended as a vehicle for student expression and all students

are urged to participate with submissions of written and artistic material.

The college seeks to fulfill the statement for academic freedom in working with the students in the production of this paper:

"The college seeks to provide an atmosphere conducive to open and honest intellectual inquiry in any college forum which is appropriate for dialogue and student participation. The students should feel free to exercise the right to dissent within limits of decorum and good taste."

All publications are subject to review by the Publications Action Group, which has been delegated the responsibility to review all college publications for content and accuracy.

This newspaper is printed by
M&M Printing
in Aliceville, Ala. (800) 367-7891

Gov. cont'd from pg. 1

determined by the quality of education they receive, it's easy to focus

graduate so that kids who stay in school and make their grade and stay out of trouble can go to college, we will create the most dynamic 20th century work force seen in this coun-

state chief think of our fair campus here in west Alabama?

"First of all, it's a beautiful structure. It's a compliment to the state of Alabama, as well as to this

ways, the leadership of the school, the quality of education that's offered to the young people, but also the total quality of life factors that Shelton provides is of tremendous value."

One of the areas of interest of the *Courier* that the reporters were drilled to pursue concerned the college scholarships the Siegelman lottery would provide. There had been conflicting reports about how the junior colleges would fit in to the Hope Scholarship program.

Our intrepid reporter pressed on with a question about what money would be available for junior college students—and what kind of GPA would they be required to have to get a schol-

arship.

The Governor seemed truly undecided about how this would all work. After a moment's hesitation, he said, "The people I appoint that will oversee the education lottery will get together on those specific questions. We'll have to wait and see."

We had our quotes, and we had snapped quite a few pictures. The governor made his way to the exit, with one of our reporters hanging on to catch any other significant mumblings. We hadn't gotten everything we wanted, but everyone was happy with the reporters' performances.

Sometimes that's not a bad plan, that Plan B.



Becky Avery, outgoing SGA president at Shelton, was one of the *Courier* reporter/photographers covering the governor's visit. Not only did she cover the action; she became a part of it.

on the importance of education," said Siegelman.

The governor put special emphasis on the importance of the two and four year colleges in the state's future.

"When we offer full college scholarships to every high school

try. That will mean more jobs, higher paying jobs and high quality jobs," said Siegelman.

But what about us, specifically? A *Courier* reporter was the first one to get to him when he made it off the stage.

What does our recently elected

community."

Other reporters from TV stations and other papers tried to wedge in between Siegelman and our *Courier* reporter. But he wasn't giving in just yet. His microcassette recorder remained near the governor's mouth, and Siegelman continued, "In many



After all was said and done, Shelton State President Tom Uniphrey (L) chatted animatedly with University of Alabama President Andrew Sorensen.

Annie cont'd from pg. 1

great! We have a strong cast, and an awesome set. Everyone should come see the show," said Hillary Burke, an ensemble member of the cast.

Annie Get Your Gun is the story of Annie Oakley, born Phoebe Ann Mosey in Ohio in 1860. Annie is known as the best shot around and supports her little brother and sisters by selling the game she hunts. When she's discovered by Col. Buffalo Bill, he persuades the young sharpshooter to join his Wild West Show. Annie does and immediately falls head over heels for the dashing shooting ace Frank Butler, who headlines the show. Soon Annie eclipses Butler as the main attraction, which, while good for Buffalo Bill's business, is bad for her romance.

With his male ego severely bruised, Frank Butler leaves the show to join a rival production. In the end, Annie and Frank are pitted in a final shooting match that proves "You Can't Get A Man With a Gun." Other melodies in the show include: "Doin' What Comes Natur'ly," "The Girl That I Marry," and the famous, "There's No Business Like Show Business."

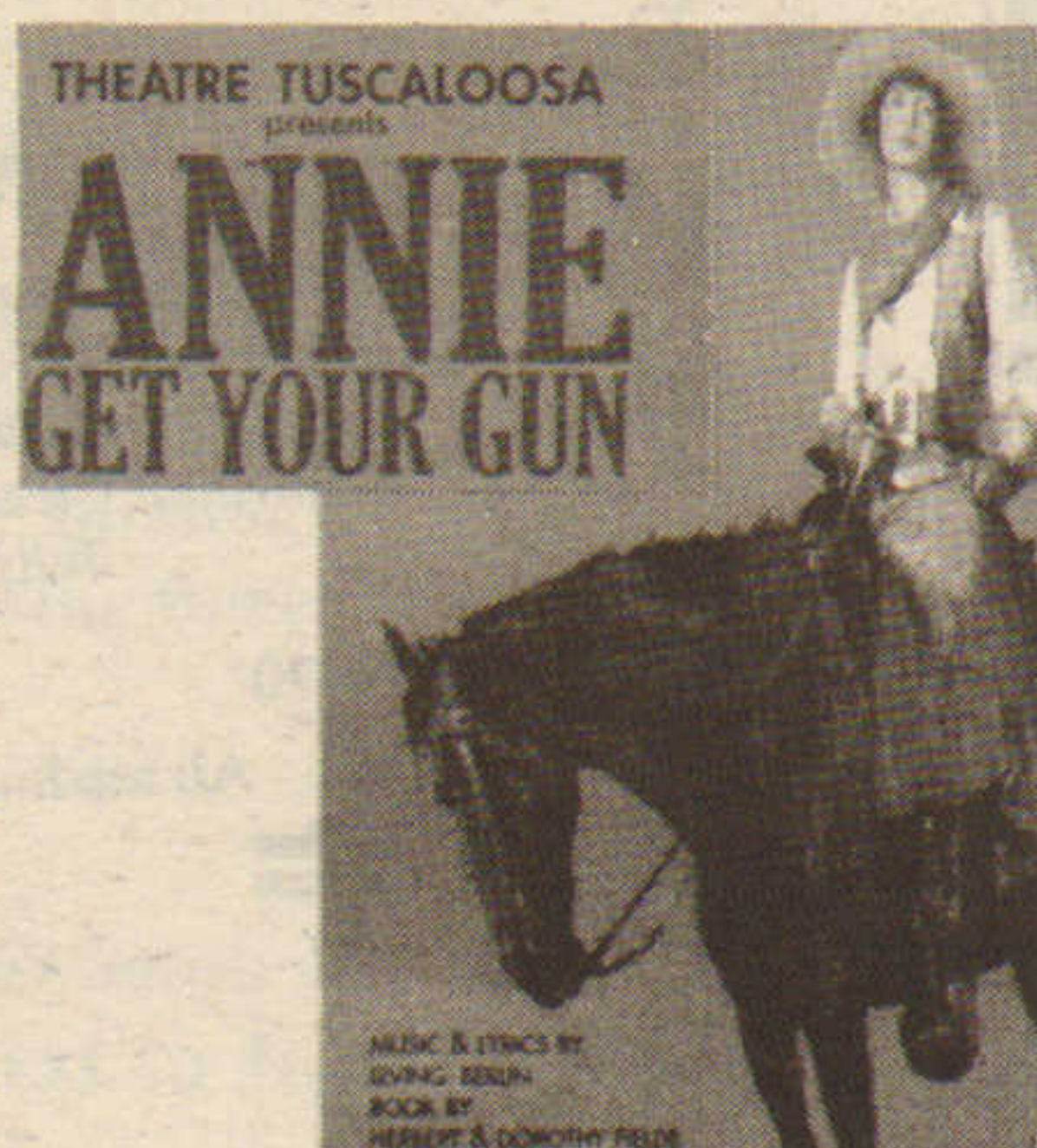
Celeste Burnum, a Tuscaloosa native and alumnus of Theatre Tuscaloosa productions, will play Annie Oakley. Kip Tyner, a local TV personality and City Councilman, portrays Frank Butler. He

said, "This is my 19th show with Theatre Tuscaloosa. This is one of the strongest ensembles I have ever worked with, and will be one of the most entertaining shows Tuscaloosa has ever seen."

Performances are scheduled July 30 through Aug. 8 at the Bean-Brown Theatre. Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m. with Wednesday and Sunday matinees beginning at 2 p.m.

Ticket prices are \$12 for adults, \$10 for seniors, and \$8 for students. Discounts are available for groups of 15 and larger.

Tickets may be purchased over the phone by calling the Theatre Tuscaloosa box office at 391-2277 or in person at the box office from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Aug. 4 showing of *Annie Get Your Gun* is free for Shelton students.



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The Entertainment Page

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Many wonder about rap's appeal—to black & white

By Jahmelle Ellington

A quote from the rap group Naughty by Nature explains why some people can't stand rap music. "If you ain't never been to the ghetto, don't ever come to the ghetto, 'cause you wouldn't understand the ghetto. So stay the f--- out of the ghetto."

Not exactly welcoming and inclusive, I'll admit.

But the funny thing is that rap has become an art form that is attractive to millions. Last year, according to an article in *Time* in February, rap sold 81 million albums last year, in comparison to country music's 72 million.

Rap is also enjoying its 20-year anniversary. That isn't bad for a form of entertainment that was supposed to be a fad.

These facts would seem to be contradictory, but perhaps they are not. Rap music is the music of rebelliousness today. The youth of today—both black and white—feel that rappers are the only people who really talk like

they know what is going on in the minds of the youth of today.

Whether you like it or not, in the minds of many of today's young people the rappers are talking about the things that do concern them: guns, drugs and money.

Rap, you must admit, is a healthier thing to be into than drugs. And for some it is a replacement for drug selling as a way to get ahead.

John Smith, a young aspiring rapper from Birmingham, says, "Rap is an act of the imagination of where I want to be in life. Everyone today sees rap as a quick lick, as we say, to make some fast money without selling drugs or robbing someone."

Many people believe rap is alive and well because it is an artifact of the African culture. For many years we have been entertained and taught by rappers. Poets like Langston Hughes, Maya Angelou (and even Muhammad Ali) were really rappers.

It started back with the Bambada and the Congo drum, and I believe it will be around for a long, long, time.

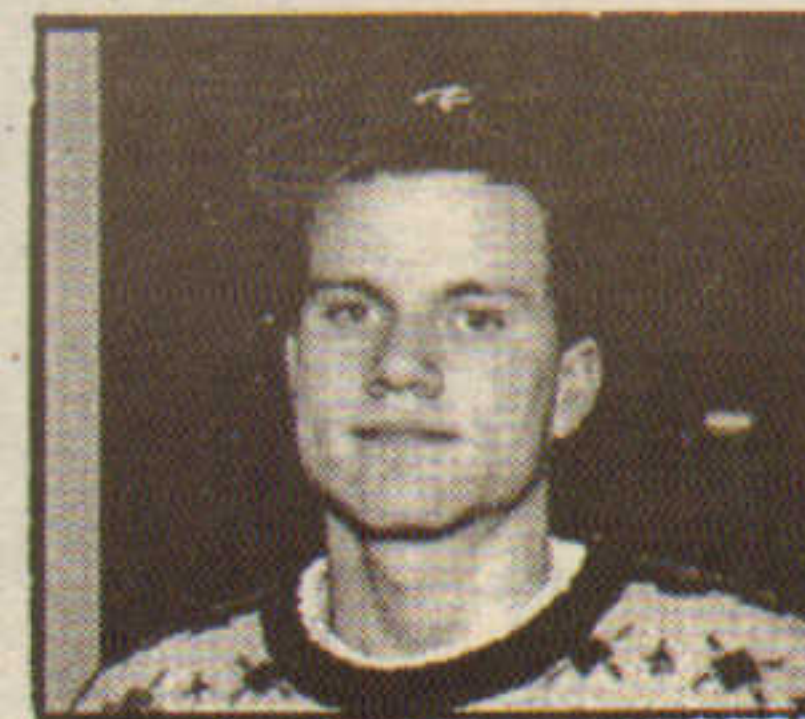
Roberts reviews...

Eyes Wide Shut

By Brian Roberts

In this the biggest money-making year in the film industry's history, the most misunderstood film is also the most masterful one. *Eyes Wide Shut*, the final film of Stanley Kubrick, has staked an early claim as the favorite for this year's awards.

Starring the husband and wife team of Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman, *Eyes Wide Shut*, is the big summer movie that most people know the least about. That was



how Stanley Kubrick worked, and when he died in March of this year, the people at Warner Bros. honored his wishes and kept the exact content of the film a secret all the way up until its release on July 16.

It's difficult to give you a simple plot summary of the film, because it is by no means a simple film. Thematically it deals with love and trust as a married couple of nearly a decade deals with the issue of infidelity. But this isn't the typical film about a husband and wife, because Stanley Kubrick did not make typical films.

His career started in 1950 with *Day of Fight*. But it wasn't until 1957 when he teamed with Kirk Douglas in *Paths of Glory* that his career was given the boost that it needed. Studio executives did not understand his films, and were hesitant to give him a big budget picture.

When pre-production began on the 1960 film about slavery in ancient Rome, *Spartacus*, its star, Kirk Douglas, suggested the enigmatic Kubrick to the executives at Universal Pictures. The brilliance of that work earned Kubrick the respect of the industry and set him on his way. Four out of his next five films earned best director nominations (*Dr. Strangelove* 1964, *2001: A Space Odyssey* 1968, *A Clockwork Orange* 1971, *Barry Lyndon* 1975), yet amazingly, he has still yet to win an Academy Award.

The reason for that, I can only guess,

is that all of his films, like *Eyes Wide Shut*, are not completely appreciated until their audiences have had a few years to digest them. Considered by many to be his great-

est work, *2001*, was panned by both critics and audiences alike. But as 1968 rolled into 1969 and the reality of an American walking on the moon came closer, everyone took notice of the brilliance of the film. It is my feeling that as society continues to

digress to the level where the characters in *Eyes Wide Shut* exist, everyone will truly appreciate it for the incredible film that it is.

Not only does Stanley Kubrick get career performances from both Cruise and Kidman, he continues to show an understanding of the visual art of film making greater than that of anyone to ever work in the industry. Every frame of film is filled, and every frame has its own distinctive colors.

If you've seen Kubrick's other works, you'll know exactly what I am talking about. This isn't something new to Kubrick, but his trademark. The uncanny ability to make something completely uninteresting look absolutely beautiful and complex.

As the last frames of credits crossed the screen the once common phrase "The End" bid audiences farewell. Sadly, it's not just the end of a beautiful film, but the life and career of the greatest director our world has known. *Eyes Wide Shut* is an extremely complex film that is not for everyone. It is harsh and vulgar, and does not move at the breakneck pace of the vast majority of '90s movies. It is a cautionary tale of life and love. I loved every second of it.

Eyes Wide Shut plays daily at Carmike's Bama Six at 12:40 p.m., 1:30 p.m., 3:50 p.m., 4:45 p.m., 7:00 p.m., 8:00 p.m., and 10:10 p.m. Rated R for language, nudity, drug use, and strong sexual content. 169 minutes.

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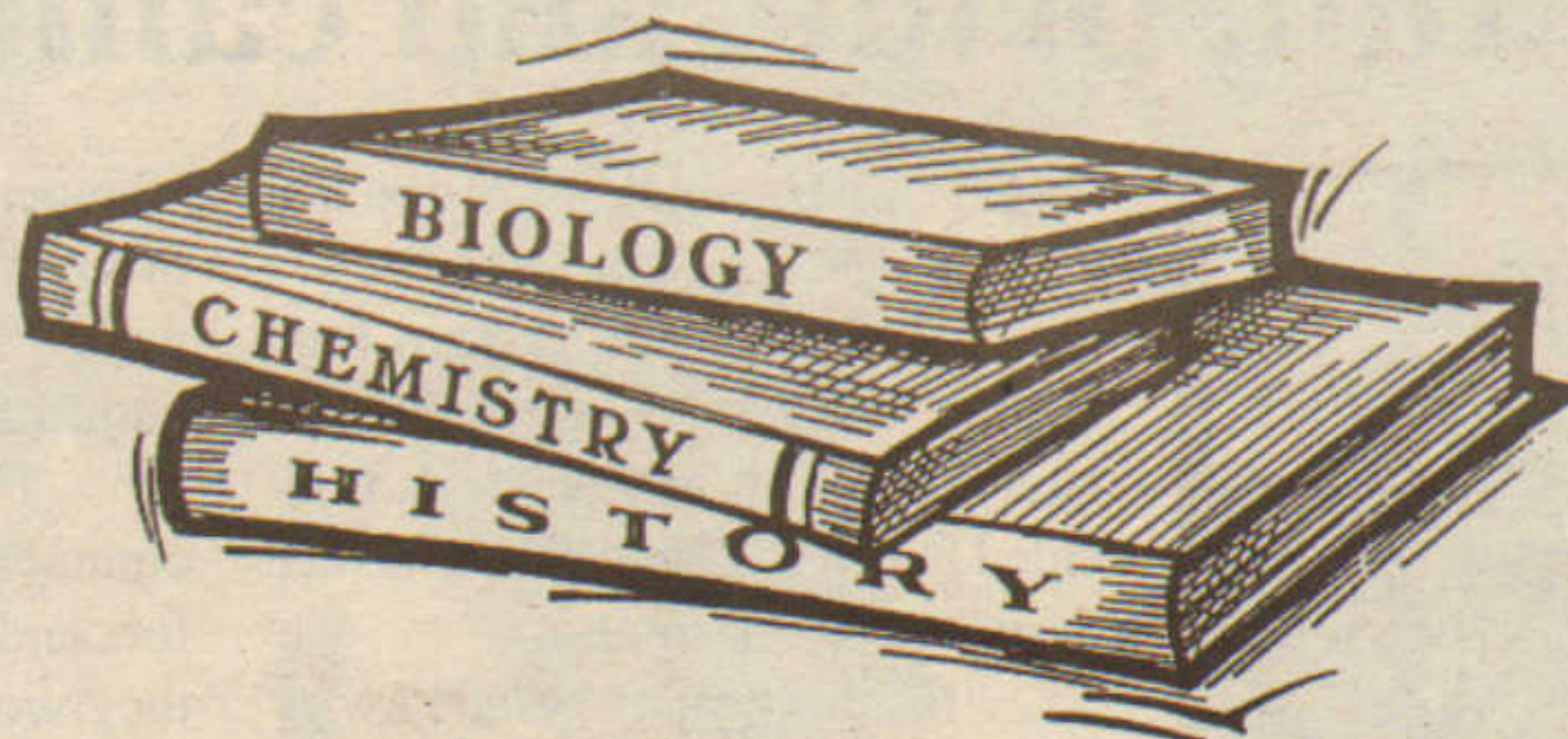
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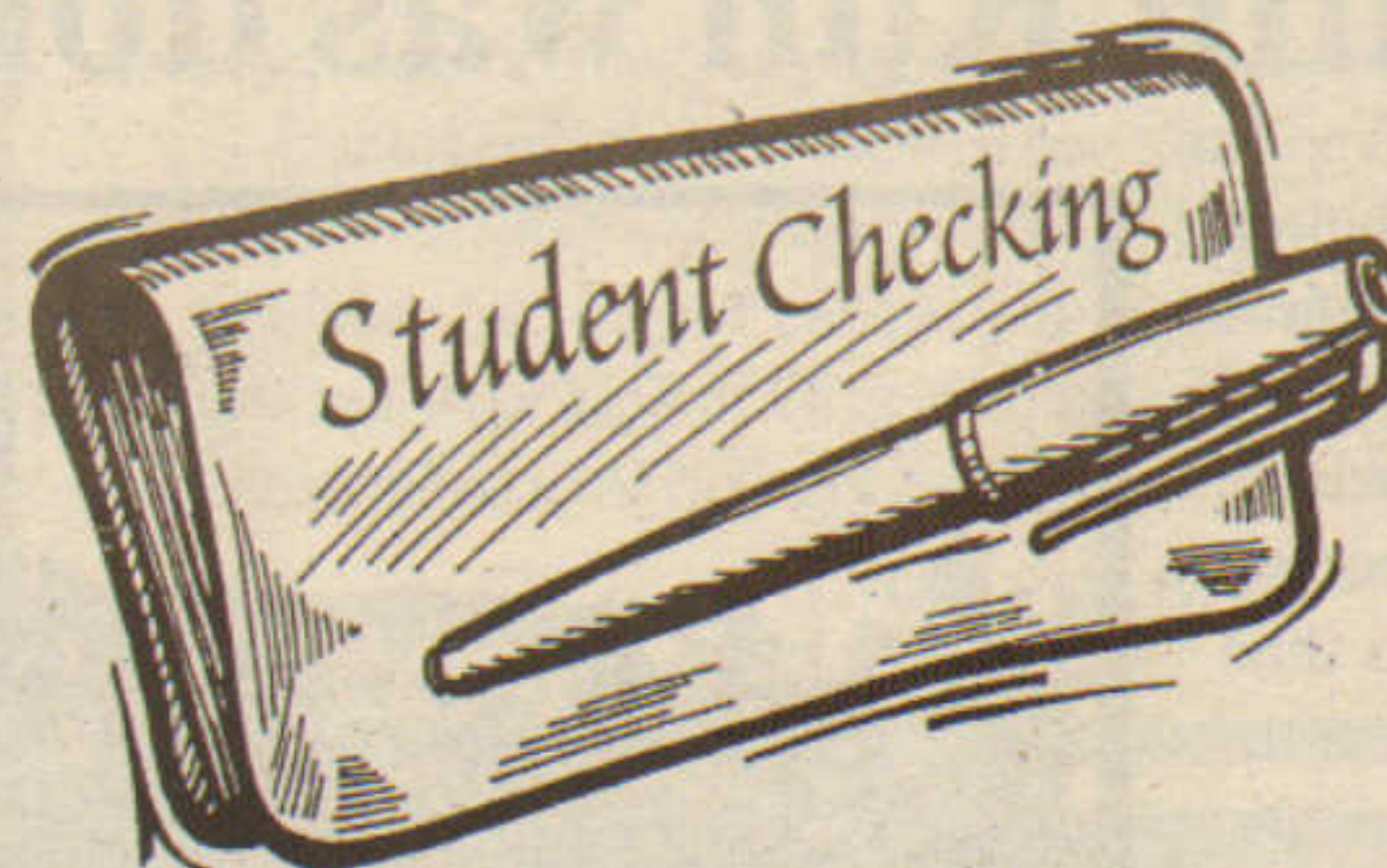
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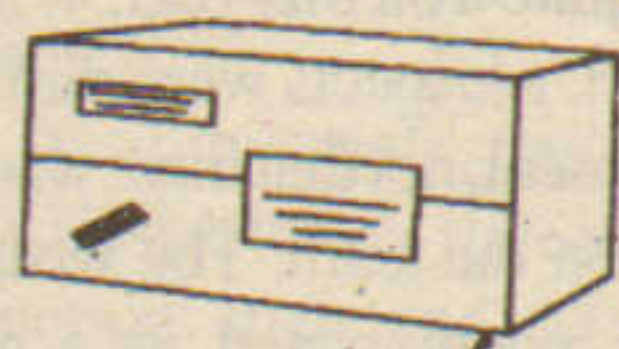
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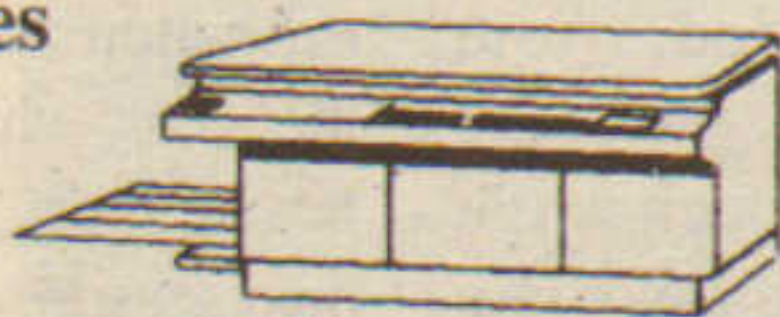
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Sports

—The Buccaneers are Here to Play—

Millennium Run was done for fun, pride, and camaraderie

On July 22, at 5 p.m. Shelton State and the Tuscaloosa Runners Club sponsored a one-mile road race, the Millennium Sundown Run.

The mid-summer happening was a media event as no less than three radio stations chose to produce live remotes from outside the west end of the campus.

Veteran runners like John Conroy, recently retired from the University of Alabama and running in competitions all over the South, mixed with others who thought they would try the mile on a lark.



The Open heat produced some strong runners



The Millennium Sundown Run was a media event

Heats were held in age groups ranging from elementary to senior citizens. Cash prizes were given to

the winners in the open race and awards were given to the top three finishers in all other races.

According to Shelton State President Tom Umphrey, the run was another opportunity for the community to become involved with an event at the college.

"This is a chance for the people of West Alabama to come out and participate in a fun event at Shelton State Com-

munity College.

"As a community college, we believe our role is to serve the people of this area. This Millennium Sundown Run gives everyone, children, college students, young adults, and senior citizens, the chance to participate," Umphrey said.

Over 70 runners participated in the run, which looped around the campus from the west door toward the Fire College and back.

Faizel Emamaullee won the open men's race with a 4:42 time, while Shelton's own Princess Norwood won the women's division with a 6:31 time.

Norwood, who played

women's basketball at Shelton last year enjoyed her win.

"I used to run track in high school, but I have not run a lot lately. I got up last week and decided to run a bit and give this race a try," said Norwood.

In other heats, Crystal Lawley finished first place won the physically challenged category for the women.

Aaron Doucet won the male elementary division. Caroline Holland won the female.

Kurt Woods won in the junior high division and Melissa Griffon took home the female win.

In the high school division, Chris Royster won in the male heat and Natalie Dunn won the female heat.

In the college division, Wade Ellis won in the men's heat and Sara Cannon won in the female race.

What was perhaps the most enjoyable aspect of the event was the camaraderie enjoyed by the participants and the onlookers. Lucy Kubiszyn, director of Public Relations for the college, and her husband Jack waited through almost two hours of race heats and just plain heat to have their chance.

Hampered by mutual hip surgeries in recent months, they still took off with a purposeful stride into the humid air.

The most often overheard comment was that it all looked like fun, and, by gosh, they all believed they would try it themselves next time.

They may be off the hook, however, for millennium runs really do not come along very often.



Looks not withstanding, Shelton's own Paul Brown enjoyed the race and turned in a very good time under nine minutes

What's next?..A look at life for athletes after Shelton sports

By James A. Crawford with contributions from Daniel Pettey

All good things come to an end. It was no different this year for Shelton State's sports programs, which closed out their seasons a couple of months ago. But what happens to the players when there's no ball to play?

Shelton State did manage to have a pretty good year for player advancement in 1999.

Three baseball players stepped up in the ranks. Clay Rice is heading off to the University of Alabama in Huntsville, Jon Mark Sprowl headed out to the minor leagues to work on his skills and Brandon Medders is taking the trip down to Mississippi State to rake in a degree and some more experience.

"I had a chance to go play at a larger university so I jumped at it. I could have played pro ball but I wanted to stay in school and enjoy my college years," said Medders.

The men's golf team is doing quite well this year. With a national title under their belts, most of the team could head anywhere they wanted. Fortunately, as freshmen, most will be returning to play at Shelton, minus star player Jason Dillard who has opted to move on to the four-year level at West Alabama.

All the men's basketball players have found roads to keep traveling on. Jahmele Ellington is heading to N.E. Louisiana, Undrae Lilly is heading back to Montevallo, Charles Goodson is moving north to Upper Iowa Uni-

versity, Sidney Williams is looking for a Div. I school and Mark Eubanks and Freddie Jackson are looking to walk on at another Div. II or Div. III school.

The women who play sports at Shelton haven't fared quite as well.

Women's sports just aren't in the spotlight like the men's sports are, and that's a shame because most work just as hard and deserve the spotlight.

Despite the talent, though, none of Shelton's women's players found four-year colleges on the lookout.

Princess Norwood, from women's basketball, is returning as a student assistant coach while she pursues her second associate degree after switching to nursing. LaTonya Wilson, considered the

top potential for four-year play, is considering a move to the University of Tennessee and may walk on to the women's team there.

Three remaining members of last year's team are returning for another round of play, three are finishing up their degrees at Shelton and one is heading out to the University of Alabama, although playing is not in the works.

Women's Softball dodged the advancement bullet by coming up with another year on the books for most of the players.

The majority of the team remained eligible for another year due to Shelton switching to fastpitch style this year, which is considered a different sport, and will return again next season.

The girls who could have moved on found it a hard road ahead

and opted to stay. Karla Shirley is the lone hold-out for next season. She has decided to focus on maintaining her perfect 4.0 GPA instead of athletics, according to coach Ussery.

"Karla just decided to concentrate on her academics this year and I can't blame her," he said.

The women's soccer team also struggled quite a bit this year. With a 0-10 season, prospects were dim for any recruitment, not that there wasn't any talent on the team. The women were just underexposed in a new program that has since seen a coaching change.

Of the nine sophomores, three are moving on to four-year colleges, with no playing time in hand at the moment; three are still at Shelton and plan to graduate, one dropped out, one graduated and is unsure about the future and one may return.

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Mozingo's Gonzoid Investigations

Why did this 4th's sizzle fizzle?

By Coy Mozingo

I was somewhere between Fosters and Eutaw, cruising down Hwy. 11, when I began to wonder what I was doing exactly.

I was going to see a fireworks show on the river in Demopolis. But why there? Then it occurred to me that Tuscaloosa was not putting on a show this year. Grim memories of my investigative trip to downtown Tuscaloosa came rushing back to me as I pushed play on my portable tape recorder.

The first thing I heard was the sad voice of a desk clerk at the annex of the City Hall. I had asked him if he knew anything about any activities going on in the city for the Fourth. Raising his eyebrows slowly, he said, "Nope, man, no sponsors this year. No show for you young folks."

"I see," I said. "Do you

know where I can acquire more information?" His eyes brightened as he said, "We have a great open-door policy here. You can go in and sit down and have a nice conversation with the mayor."

"Great!" I thought. Now, I was getting somewhere. Proceeding down the hallway to the mayor's office, panic struck. "My god!" I thought. I hadn't anticipated speaking to the mayor about this. What would I say? Would my investigation on the lack of a fireworks show offend the Honorable Mayor Al Dupont? If I was seeking a career in this, the last thing I wanted was an enemy at city hall.

I could already see him in his office, relaxing and laughing with a guest. Golf shirt and khakis intact, he looked ready for almost anything.

I took a deep breath and proceeded to stroll into his office, introduce myself, and bombard him

with as many probing questions as I could before other matters arose. Silence.

I felt the brass doorknob turn as I opened the door and suddenly.... Bam! An obstacle in glasses and high heels positioned herself between me and his honor the mayor. "May I help you?" she said in a voice that reeked of contempt.

"I'm just taking advantage of your great open door policy ma'am." No reaction. No acknowledgment. "I just need to talk to him for a few minutes."

"I'm sorry. The mayor is a little busy now. Maybe you could come back some other time."

Drat. It was time to show some credentials, maybe a few flashy titles would be enough to appease this troll guarding the bridge.

"Let me introduce myself. My name is Coy Mozingo, staff writer and reporter for the *Shelton State Courier*—the official campus newspaper. I wanted to ask the mayor a few questions about the fireworks show." I thought surely this was enough, but then she dealt the final blow.

"Well, there isn't going to be one. Maybe you should check with the Chamber of Commerce for some other activities."

"OK, thanks," I said, stunned at how easily she deferred me, shocked by her attitude, and down-

right impressed at how devoted she was to guarding the mayor. She must have sensed my true intent on attacking him with my piercing questions. Good job, madam secretary, good job.

The lady behind the desk at the Chamber of Commerce instructed me to check with the PARA offices for more information.

PARA, eh? If they were the responsible party, then they had some explaining to do. How dare they take away our fireworks! With my anger shielding me from the heat of the sun, I made my way down Greensboro to the PARA offices.

I threw open the door and marched upstairs. Oh no, another secretary. No ma'am, not this time. "I need to speak to an administrator!"

"OK, one second," she said politely.

Surprise. My anger drew back somewhat as I saw progress unfolding. She instructed me to go next door and speak to Jennifer Bachman. As I walked into her office, she greeted me kindly and I introduced myself with a little less glam this time.

Our conversation continued and the facts became clear. Nameless sponsors backed out at the last minute due to a lack of funds. No new sponsors arrived and the show was cancelled.

Ah, but next year we will have forgotten all about it, because we will be distracted at how marvelous the fireworks are over the city. Miss Bachman told me that the plans are underway for a show to top all other shows.

Click. The tape had stopped and I found myself riverside in Demopolis as I parked the Mustang. I could hear the band playing and the sound of free-lance fireworks all around.

I crossed a great field occupied by pickups and 4-wheel drives of all kinds. The occasional tattooed biker would drive by, beer in hand and pride in his heart.

Because this was America—a land where everyone is at home. The people around me were living the American dream. They were happy, among friends, and in a land that their forefathers fought to free.

Ah, Independence Day, a day to forget about yourself and to embrace this wonderful country.

As the fireworks show began, I felt a little sadness for Tuscaloosa and hoped that some God-fearing sponsor would dare not back out next year.

After all, I've seen the mayor; I've parlayed with PARA.

And I've definitely done Demopolis.

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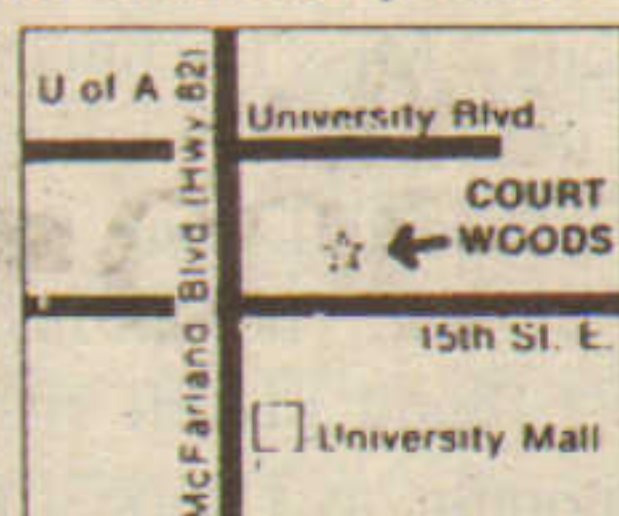


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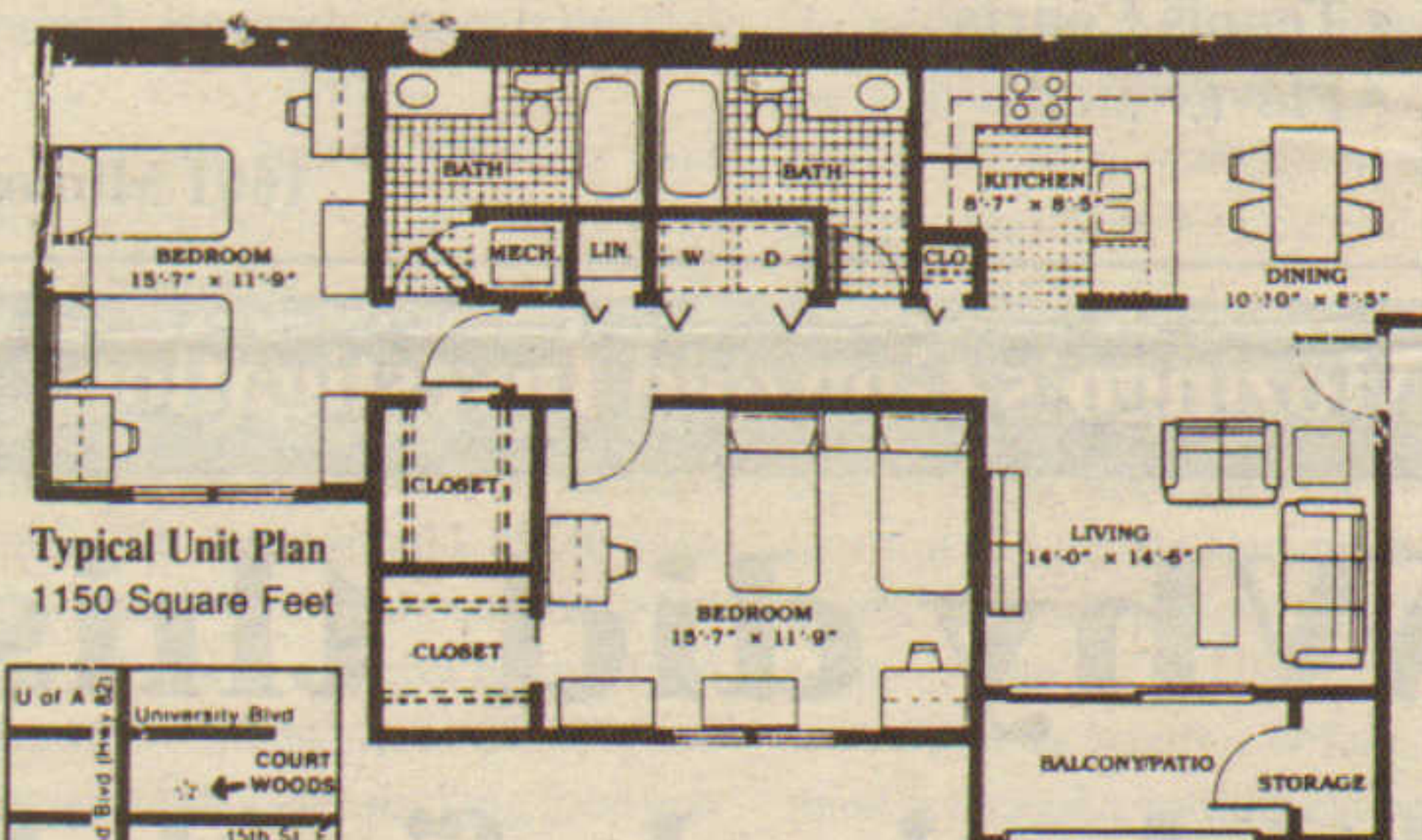
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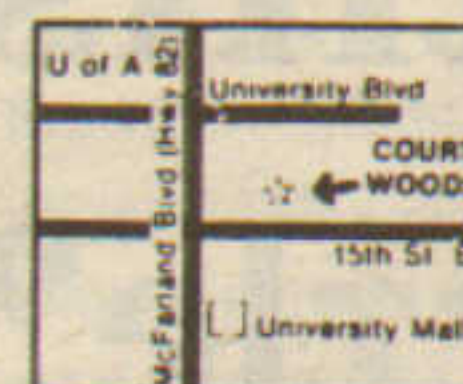
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